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## Embassies Under Siege

A Review of 48 Embassy  
Takeovers, 1971-1980

rian M. Jenkins

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## PREFACE

As part of its research on the phenomenon of terrorism, The Rand Corporation has maintained a chronology of incidents of international terrorism. This chronology, now consisting of approximately 1,400 incidents that have occurred since 1968, provides a useful historical record and a data base for analysis.

The takeover of the American embassy in Teheran in November 1979, and of the Dominican Republic's embassy in Bogotá in February 1980, prompted a review of this particular terrorist tactic for possible emergent patterns or trends. This report examines 43 seizures and five attempted seizures of diplomatic facilities which occurred in the past decade.

Before the report was completely drafted, the siege in Bogotá ended, necessitating a few revisions to reflect the outcome of that episode. Less than a week later, Iranian Arabs seized the embassy of Iran in London, requiring further additions and revisions. In consequence, an arbitrary cutoff date was imposed. This report reflects the embassy-takeover situation as of June 1, 1980. In an "Epilogue," the author comments on embassy intrusions in the months following that date which fail to qualify as takeovers. Further seizures may be reported in a revised edition.

An earlier Rand study examined 77 international hostage episodes, including kidnappings and barricade-and-hostage situations such as the embassy seizures examined here. That study was summarized in Brian Jenkins, Janera Johnson, and David Ronfeldt, *Numbered Lives: Some Statistical Observations from 77 International Hostage Episodes*, P-5905, July 1977.

The author wishes to thank Robert Perry and Frederick Biery for their extremely helpful comments and suggestions. He also wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance of Alyce Raphael in maintaining the chronology, and of Geraldine Petty, who assembled the historical data used in the preparation of the report.

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## SUMMARY

Seizing embassies became a common form of protest and coercion in the 1970s. Since 1971, terrorists and other militants have seized embassies on 43 occasions and attempted unsuccessfully to storm embassies on five occasions. And this does not include the numerous times mobs have sacked embassies or unarmed protestors have occupied them without taking hostages.

The tactic of seizing embassies grew out of the airliner hijackings and political kidnappings of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like many other tactics of terrorism, taking hostages at embassies appears to be contagious. One event inspires another.

The hostage-takers are of diverse origins. Palestinian groups have struck most frequently, with various guerrilla-led militant groups in El Salvador accounting for the next greatest number of incidents.

In the earlier part of the decade, half of the operations were carried out by groups, mainly Palestinian, operating abroad. In the last several years, almost all of the seizures have been carried out by groups operating on their own territory. More than half of the 48 episodes have occurred within the last two years. However, this dramatic increase is due almost entirely to the political turmoil in Iran and El Salvador.

The hostage-takers fall into two broad categories: small terrorist teams and large groups of militants, often led by armed elements. The former have seized embassies both at home and abroad, the latter always at home. Embassy takeovers by small groups have more frequently involved violence.

Diplomatic facilities have been seized in at least 27 countries. El Salvador leads the list with eight successful and three unsuccessful attacks, followed by Iran with four incidents and the United States with three. The geographic distribution of these attacks varies somewhat from the general pattern of international terrorism. Most of the seizures occurred in Latin America, followed by Western Europe and the Middle East. Over the past ten years, most of the incidents of international terrorism have occurred in Western Europe, followed by Latin America and the Middle East, although in 1980 Latin America surpassed Western Europe in total number of terrorist incidents.

Embassies of Egypt and the United States have been the favorite targets. Egyptian embassies have been seized five times (three on one day, all related to the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty), and American diplomatic posts were taken over on four occasions and

unsuccessfully assaulted once. French embassies were seized on four occasions.

In 20 out of 36 cases where demands were made, the attackers directed their demands to the host country; in 10 other cases, the demands were directed to the government whose embassy had been seized. In the six remaining cases, terrorists made demands on both governments or on other governments. The most common demand was for the release of prisoners; this occurred in 26 cases. In a few cases, the attackers also demanded money, but money was generally a secondary goal. Terrorist groups who are seeking cash kidnap businessmen, who are more lucrative targets.

In six of the 36 incidents involving some kind of demands, the demands were fully met; in five cases, they were partially met. But only two demands for governments to free prisoners were fully met, and only three were partially met.

The rate of success achieved by the hostage-takers has declined with the passage of time, clearly an indication that governments have become more resistant to terrorists holding hostages. Of the 11 cases in which the terrorists' demands were fully or partially met, seven occurred in the first half of the decade (1971-1975), and only four in the last half (1976-1980). In terms of achieving national and international publicity, virtually all of the embassy seizures were a success for the terrorists.

Overall, except for the publicity aspect, taking over embassies appears to be a losing proposition for terrorists. They come away with little but their skins and not always that. Their demands were fully met in less than 17 percent of the cases. Terrorists were arrested, captured, or killed in 48 percent of the cases where they made demands. One-third of the terrorists who participated in embassy seizures were killed or captured, although the remainder escaped punishment.

In 19 of the 36 cases where they made demands, terrorists were given safe passage to another country, sometimes in lieu of their other demands, or were permitted to simply walk away. Most of the hostages (98 percent) were released (or rescued) unharmed. Hostage-takers rarely "executed" their captives.

Security appears to work, in that the embassies of the nations that have been most frequently targeted by terrorists in other kinds of incidents (United States, United Kingdom, Israel, West Germany, and France) are underrepresented in takeover attempts. This suggests that the stringent security measures adopted by those countries serve to deter embassy takeovers. For terrorists, however, the targets are virtually limitless. If the embassies of world powers are well-guarded,

the terrorists may shift to less-protected consulates or to the less-protected embassies or diplomatic posts of smaller countries.

Governments can be expected to remain resistant to meeting terrorist demands. Thus, longer sieges can be expected, and there is a greater likelihood that these sieges will be ended by force.

## CONTENTS

PREFACE .....	iii
SUMMARY .....	v
Section	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. EMBASSY TAKEOVERS FROM 1971 TO 1980 .....	4
The Hostage-Takers .....	4
The Targets: From Airliners to Embassies .....	6
The Hostage-Takers' Demands .....	13
Increasing Resistance to Demands .....	15
The Fate of the Hostages and Their Captors .....	17
Does Security Work? .....	19
Terrorist Innovations .....	20
III. IMPLICATIONS OF TIGHTER SECURITY FOR FUTURE EMBASSY ATTACKS .....	22
EPILOGUE .....	23
Appendix: A CHRONOLOGY OF EMBASSY TAKEOVERS: 1971-1980 .....	27



## FIGURES

1. Number of incidents versus number of hostage-takers .....	5
2. Takeovers and attempted takeovers of diplomatic posts ....	8
3. Cluster pattern of embassy takeovers by quarter .....	9
4. Distribution of diplomatic-post takeovers by country .....	11
5. Geographic distribution of diplomatic-post takeovers and attempted takeovers .....	12
6. Duration of embassy takeovers .....	18

## TABLES

1. Identity of the hostage-takers .....	6
2. Distribution of embassy seizures by country .....	13
3. The diplomatic posts seized .....	14
4. The nature of the demands .....	15

## I. INTRODUCTION

The scene and script are familiar: A floodlit building is cordoned off by barbed-wire barricades, surrounded by steel-helmeted police and soldiers ready for the assault. Inside, desperate gunmen vow to hold out until death if their demands are not met. During the siege, a newspaper carries a story that the invaders have found documents inside the building showing it to be a center of spy activities against the host country. The Cabinet of the country to which the demands are directed meets in emergency session. Negotiators on the scene exchange ultimatums and discuss guarantees.

It happened 25 years ago, on February 16, 1955, when six gunmen stormed the Romanian legation in Bern, Switzerland. They killed the legation's chauffeur during a brief gun battle with Romanian officials. The remaining staff members and their families fled. In contrast to the current norm, the attackers took no hostages—they even permitted one family still trapped inside to leave. The gunmen identified themselves as anti-Communist resistance fighters and demanded that Romania free five other "anti-Communists" from prison. After 42 hours, threatened with being blasted out, the gunmen surrendered to Swiss authorities. Their demands were not met, but their act briefly captured the attention of the world.

The tactic did not catch on then. As was the case with the early hijackings of airliners, the incident proved to be an isolated one. It inspired no imitators. Not until the 1970s did seizing embassies become a common form of protest and coercion.

In the past ten years, terrorists and other militants have seized embassies and consulates on 43 occasions. In addition, armed groups have attempted unsuccessfully to storm embassies on five occasions. This does not include the numerous times mobs have sacked embassies or unarmed protestors have occupied embassy buildings without taking hostages. Nor does it include the numerous bombings or the nearly 100 diplomats who have been assassinated or kidnapped. The 48 incidents considered here comprise 37 seizures or attempted seizures of embassies, eight seizures of consulates, one takeover of an ambassador's residence, and two takeovers of offices, including those of international organizations, having diplomatic status.

As part of its research program on subnational conflict, The Rand Corporation has maintained a chronology of incidents of terrorism that have clear international consequences, i.e., incidents in which terrorists go abroad to strike their targets, select victims or targets

because of their connections to a foreign state, attack airliners on international flights, or force airliners to fly to another country. Approximately 1,400 such incidents have occurred since 1968 (1,352 had occurred through December 1979). About one-third of these involved the seizure of hostages: kidnappings, airline hijackings, or what are commonly referred to as barricade-and-hostage situations, where terrorists seize control of a building and barricade themselves with their hostages. The remainder of the incidents in the chronology comprise bombings, assassinations, and other forms of attack. The 48 incidents considered here are classified as barricade-and-hostage incidents.

All of these incidents involve forcible takeovers of embassies or other internationally protected facilities, and almost all involve the involuntary retention of hostages for purposes of publicity or coercion. All appear to have been premeditated rather than the spontaneous action of mobs.

Probably more than 48 such assaults have occurred. Some minor episodes may have been missed, and some recent minor episodes have been deliberately excluded.<sup>1</sup> In the excluded cases, none of the perpetrators were known to be armed. They took no hostages, threatened no lives, and left peacefully after a few hours, or, in one case, after only 30 minutes. What they wanted primarily was publicity. Thus, these incidents are qualitatively different from the more serious episodes examined in this report. They are more like sit-ins than seizures. Minor episodes of this type have occurred in past years, but it is extremely difficult to go back and identify all of them. That they receive more press coverage now and appear in chronologies such as the one maintained at Rand is evidence of our heightened awareness of the problem in the wake of the Teheran and Bogotá episodes. Thus, another reason for the exclusion of some recent incidents is that to include only the later ones and not the difficult-to-find earlier ones would distort the chronology, giving an exaggerated impression of the rise in the frequency of embassy takeovers. Nonetheless, the minor incidents are interesting, for they suggest that the embassy seizures in Teheran, San Salvador, and Bogotá probably inspired occupations of less consequence as a means of political expression.

<sup>1</sup> These include (1) the occupation of the Danish and Belgian embassies in Mexico City on February 18, 1980, by a leftist group; (2) the occupation of the French consular agency in Madrid on February 28, 1980, by Spanish workers; (3) the occupation of the Dutch embassy in Madrid on February 28, 1980, by four members of the National Confederation of Labor; (4) the occupation of the Spanish embassy in Paris on March 7, 1980; (5) the occupation of the Malian embassy in Senegal on March 24, 1980, by Malian students; (6) the occupation of the Salvadoran consulate in Los Angeles on March 25, 1980, by protesters; (7) the occupation of the Mexican consulate in Los Angeles on March 31, 1980; and (8) the occupation of the Colombian consulate in Quito on April 18, 1980, by supporters of the hostage-takers in Bogotá.

At the same time, some might quarrel with the inclusion of certain incidents in the chronology. Inevitably, a few of the decisions tend to be subjective. No political statement is intended by any inclusion or omission.

Although the following review of the 48 embassy takeovers that occurred between 1971 and 1980 does not enable us to make predictions about the outcomes of current or future episodes, it does provide a general idea of the scope and shape of the phenomenon and reveals some patterns and trends.

## II. EMBASSY TAKEOVERS FROM 1971 TO 1980

### The Hostage-Takers

The hostage-takers are of diverse origins: Palestinian, Japanese, and German terrorist groups, Croatians and South Moluccans, Puerto Rican separatists, militants in Iran, leftist guerrillas in El Salvador and Colombia. The OPEC headquarters in Vienna was seized in December 1975 by a multinational team of Arab and German terrorists led by a Venezuelan.

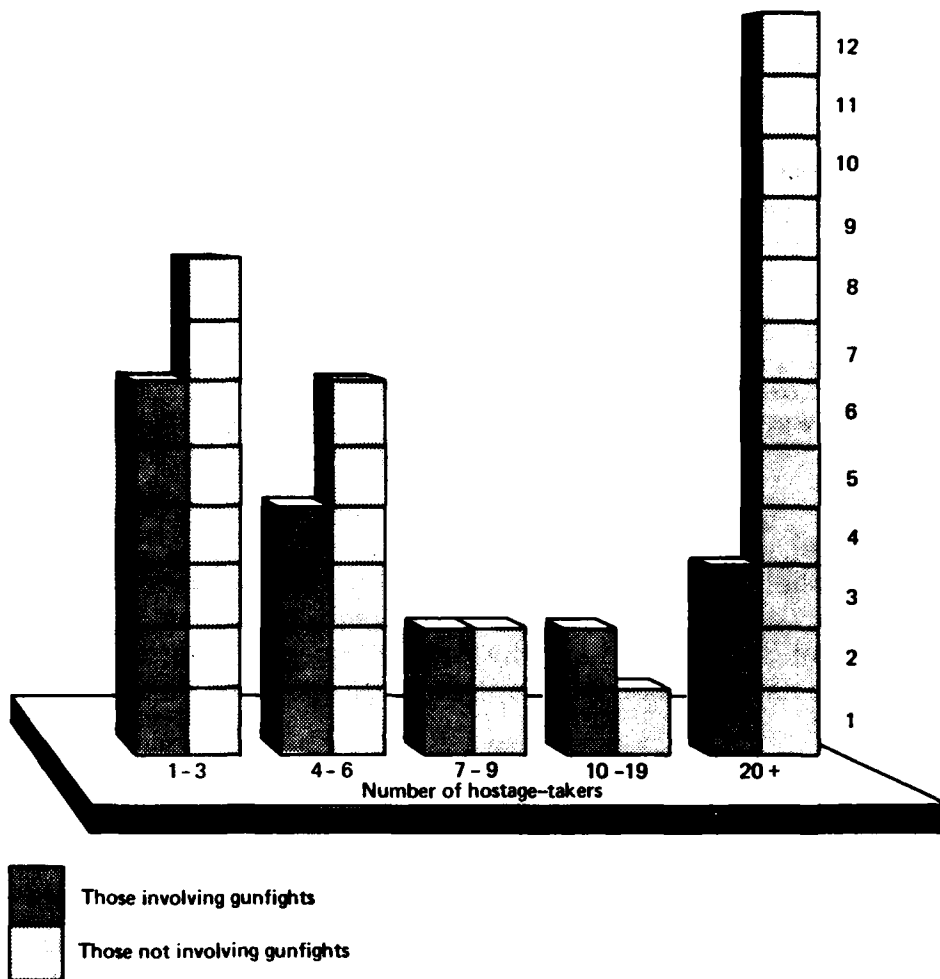
Not all hostage-takers are members of known terrorist groups. Several have been lone gunmen or persons not affiliated with any specific group. Hostage-takers fall into two broad categories: (1) lone gunmen or small terrorist teams (for the most part under 10 persons) or (2) large groups of militants (usually 20 or more), often led by armed elements. The former have seized embassies both at home and abroad, the latter always at home. Until 1978, almost all of the embassy seizures were carried out by lone gunmen or small terrorist teams. Since 1978, large groups and small terrorist teams have each carried out about half of the embassy seizures.

There appears to be an inverse correlation between the size of the group and the probability of violence. Violence occurred in 42 percent of the cases involving small terrorist teams but in only 20 percent of the cases involving large groups (see Fig. 1).

Palestinian terrorist groups have been responsible for the greatest number of embassy seizures. They seized the Israeli embassy in Bangkok in 1972, the Saudi Arabian embassies in Khartoum and Paris in 1973, the Japanese embassy in Kuwait in 1974, the Egyptian embassy in Madrid in 1975, the Syrian embassy in Rome in 1976 (an attempt to seize the Syrian embassy in Islamabad the same day failed), the Iraqi embassy in Paris in 1978, and the Egyptian embassy in Ankara in 1979.

Guerrillas and militants in El Salvador have seized the embassies of Mexico, France, Costa Rica, Venezuela, and Spain. They seized the Panamanian embassy twice in one month and attempted unsuccessfully to seize the embassies of South Africa, Guatemala, and the United States (see Table 1).

Some of the currently most active terrorist groups are notably absent from the list of participants in embassy takeovers: the Irish Republican Army, Italy's Red Brigades, and Spain's Basque separatists. The IRA generally has not seized hostages. Two IRA members were involved in the kidnapping of a Dutch businessman, but the



NOTE: The probability of violence is much greater in incidents involving smaller groups of hostage-takers.

Fig. 1—Number of incidents versus number of hostage-takers

kidnappers were apparently on the fringe of the IRA rather than being part of an authorized operation. In another case, four IRA terrorists being chased by police entered an apartment and held a married couple hostage for several days before surrendering. The Red Brigades have kidnapped both government officials and businessmen, but their operations have been directed exclusively against Italian targets. And Basque separatists have kidnapped or attempted to kidnap German and French diplomats; like the Red Brigades, however, they have avoided barricade-and-hostage situations.

Table 1  
IDENTITY OF THE HOSTAGE-TAKERS

Hostage-Takers	No. of Incidents
Palestinian militants, gunmen, and members of known terrorist groups . . . . .	13
Guerrillas and other militants in El Salvador . . . . .	11
Lone gunmen . . . . .	4
Croatian gunmen . . . . .	3
Militants in Iran . . . . .	3
Japanese terrorists . . . . .	2
Guerrillas and militants in Guatemala . . . . .	2
All other . . . . .	10

In the earlier part of the decade, half of the embassy assaults were carried out by groups, mainly Palestinian, operating abroad. But since the seizure of the Iraqi embassy by Arab gunmen in 1978, almost all such attacks have been carried out by groups operating on their own territory.

### **The Targets: From Airliners to Embassies**

The first seizure of a diplomatic post in the 1970s took place in 1971, when Croatian émigrés seized the Yugoslav consulate in Gothenburg, Sweden, and demanded the release of prisoners in Yugoslavia. Their demands were rejected and they surrendered to Swedish authorities. This incident does not seem to have provided the inspiration for the subsequent embassy seizures, however; rather, the triggering events appear to have been the hijackings connected with the Palestinian struggle in the Middle East.

Palestinian terrorists claimed responsibility for 12 hijackings between 1968 and 1972. Their most spectacular operation was the coordinated hijacking of five airliners in September 1970. One of these incidents ended in a gun battle aboard an El Al airliner in London. One airliner was ordered flown to Cairo; after the passengers were evacuated, it was blown up. Three of the airliners were flown to Dawson Field, a desert airstrip in Jordan, where several hundred passengers were held hostage until the British, Swiss, and West German governments agreed to release seven Arab prisoners.

The Dawson Field incident represented the high point in the Palestinian campaign against commercial aviation, but it cost them dearly.

The incident led to a brief but bloody civil war in Jordan, in which the armed Palestinian groups were driven out of the country. The hijacking campaign also damaged the Palestinian cause by alienating world opinion. More important, security measures were increased and all nations began to cooperate in denying asylum to hijackers. Both the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which had been responsible for many of the early attacks on airliners, renounced the tactic. Something new was needed.

In September 1972, members of Black September, a new Palestinian terrorist organization connected with Al Fatah, broke into the Israeli headquarters at the Olympic Games in Munich and took nine members of the Israeli team hostage. The terrorists demanded the release of 200 Palestinians imprisoned in Israel and safe passage for themselves and their hostages to another country. Israel rejected their demands; all of the hostages and five of the terrorists were killed in a subsequent gun battle with German police. This was the first of the major international barricade-and-hostage incidents.<sup>1</sup> Black September struck again in December 1972, seizing the Israeli embassy in Bangkok, and again in March 1973 when they seized the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum.

In recent years, embassy seizures have occurred more frequently: More than half of the 48 incidents considered here occurred within the last two years. However, this dramatic increase is due almost entirely to the political turmoil in Iran (where four embassies have been seized) and El Salvador (where guerrillas and militants have seized or attempted to seize embassies on 11 occasions). The numbers of takeover incidents in the years between 1971 and 1979 are shown in Fig. 2.

Like many other terrorist tactics, hostage-taking appears to be contagious. The incidents do not fall randomly throughout the decade, but occur in clusters (see Fig. 3). Clearly the takeover of the Israeli embassy in Bangkok in December 1972 inspired the takeover of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum in March 1973—Black September claimed responsibility for both. And it is likely that the Khartoum incident inspired the seizure of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Paris in September 1973. The kidnapping of the Belgian ambassador and the takeover of the French embassy in Havana by an anti-Castro Cuban in October 1973, an incident covered in the Mexican press, may have inspired the 1974 takeover of the French embassy in Mexico by a lone gunman. The seizure of the French and Costa Rican embassies in San

<sup>1</sup> In several previous incidents, kidnappers were surrounded at their hideouts, resulting in a barricade-and-hostage situation. The Munich attack, however, was a deliberately created siege situation.



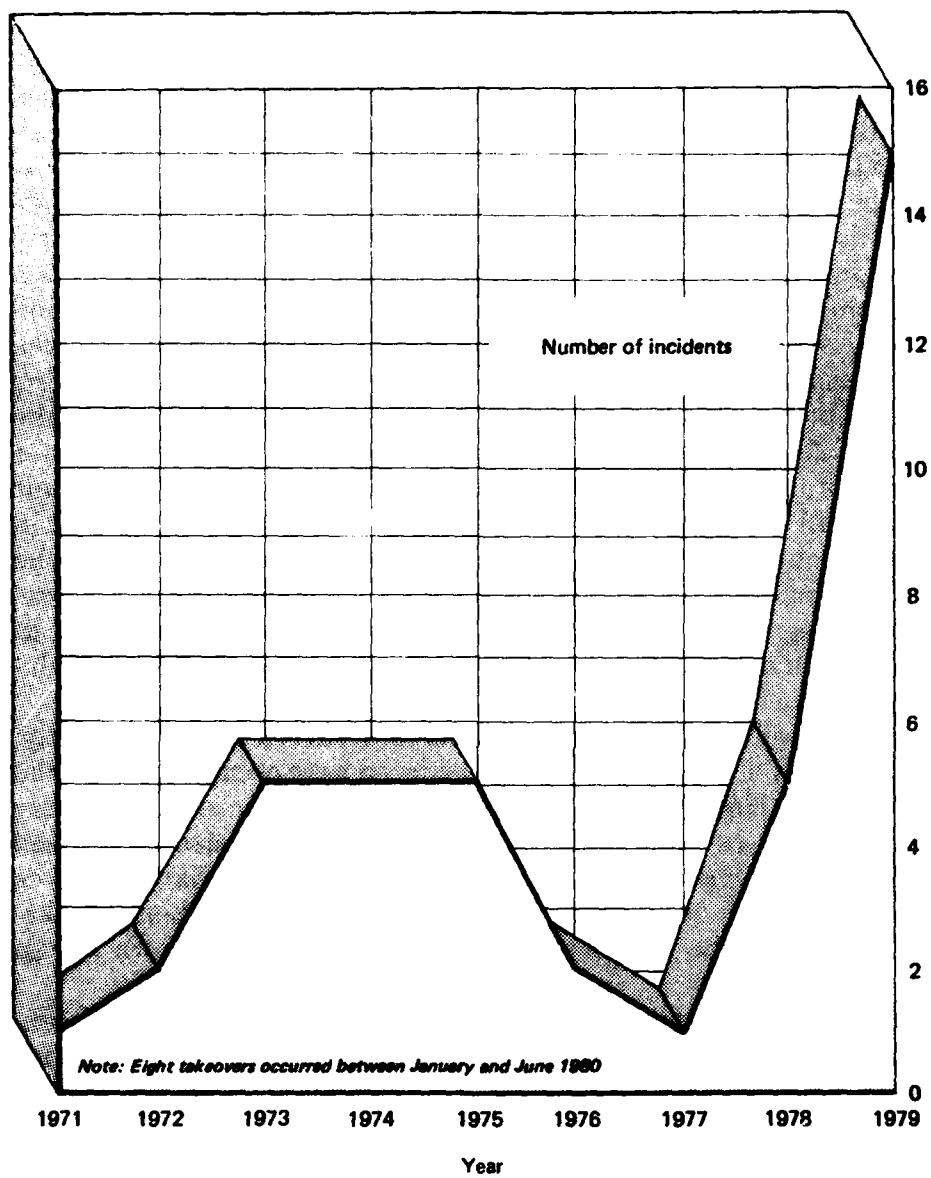


Fig. 2—Takeovers and attempted takeovers of diplomatic posts

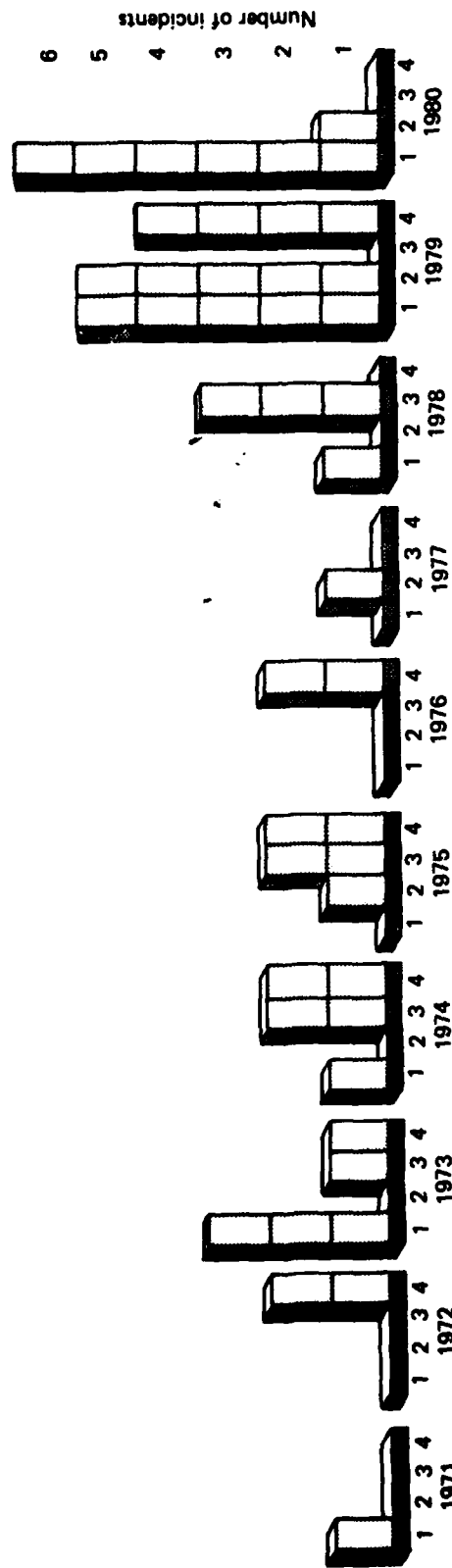


Fig. 3—Cluster pattern of embassy takeovers by quarter

Salvador on May 5, 1979, were part of a coordinated operation which initially included or inspired the takeover of the Venezuelan embassy in San Salvador six days later. The seizure of the American embassy in Iran, along with the numerous embassy seizures in El Salvador, probably inspired the seizure of the Dominican Republic embassy in Bogotá. And the Iran and Bogotá incidents probably inspired the recent seizure of the Iranian embassy in London.

Diplomatic facilities have been seized in at least 27 countries. El Salvador leads the list with eight embassy seizures plus three attacks, followed by Iran with four, the United States with three, and France, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, and Guatemala with two each. (See Fig. 4 and Table 2.) The geographic distribution of the incidents varies slightly from the general pattern of international terrorism. Twenty-one have occurred in Latin America, 11 in Western Europe, 10 in the Middle East and North Africa, three in North America, and three in the Far East. In contrast, most incidents of international terrorism have occurred in Western Europe, followed by Latin America and the Middle East (see Fig. 5).

The embassies, consulates, or legations of the 27 countries were seized or attacked along with offices of international organizations having diplomatic status. In recent years, Egypt has increasingly been the object of attack by Palestinian groups. Enraged at Egypt's willingness to negotiate with Israel, Palestinian terrorists have taken over Egyptian embassies five times (three in one day).

American diplomatic posts were taken over on four occasions and unsuccessfully assaulted once. The American ambassador and consul general were held at the ambassador's residence in Haiti in 1973. In 1975, Japanese terrorists seized the American consular offices in Kuala Lumpur. Twice in 1979, Iranian militants took over the American embassy in Teheran. U.S. Marine guards and local police repulsed an assault on the American embassy in San Salvador in 1979. In addition, American diplomats were among the hostages in three other episodes: the seizure of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum in 1973, the seizure of the Venezuelan consulate in the Dominican Republic in 1974, and the seizure of the Dominican Republic embassy in Bogotá in 1980.

French embassies were occupied by gunmen on four occasions. In October 1973, a lone gunman kidnapped the Belgian ambassador to Cuba and took him to the French embassy in Havana. Three months later, another lone gunman seized hostages at the French embassy in Mexico City. In September 1974, Japanese terrorists seized the French embassy in The Hague, and in May 1979, leftist guerrillas seized the French embassy in San Salvador.

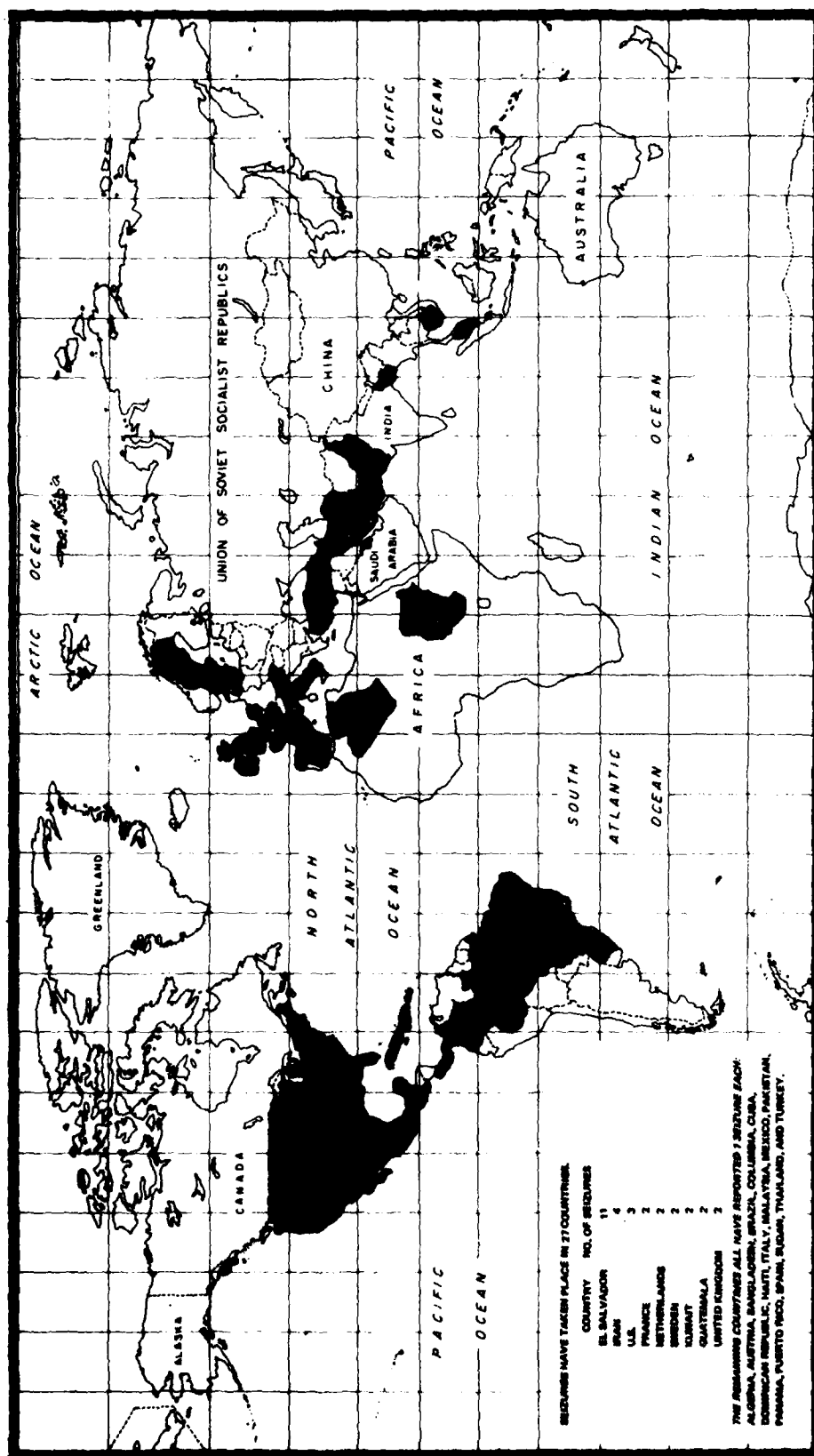


Fig. 4—Distribution of diplomatic-post takeovers by country

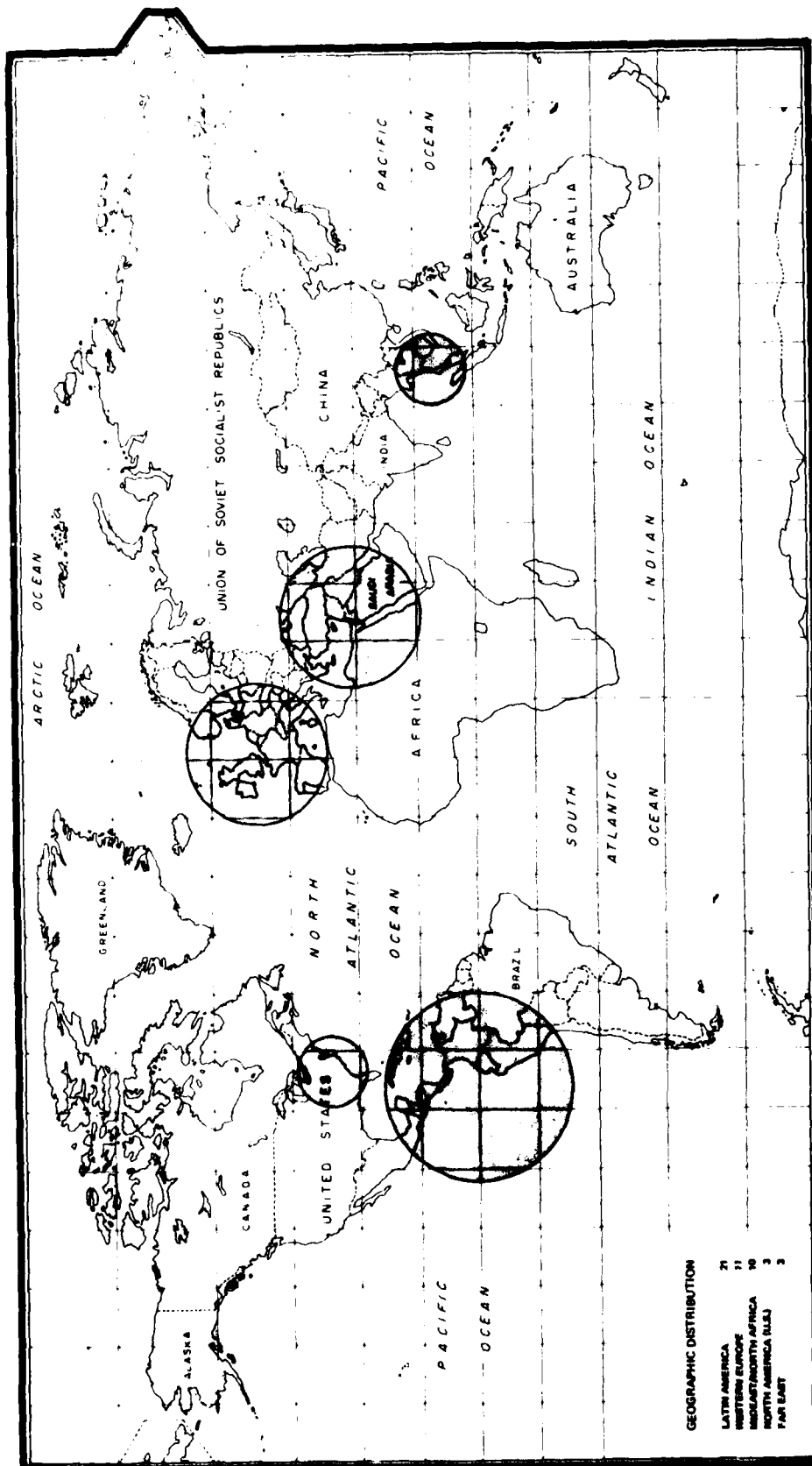


Fig. 5—Geographic distribution of diplomatic-post takeovers and attempted takeovers

**Table 2**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF EMBASSY SEIZURES BY COUNTRY**

Country	No. of Incidents
El Salvador . . . . .	11
Iran . . . . .	4
United States . . . . .	3
France . . . . .	2
Netherlands . . . . .	2
Sweden . . . . .	2
Kuwait . . . . .	2
Guatemala . . . . .	2
United Kingdom . . . . .	2
Algeria, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Panama, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sudan, Thailand, and Turkey	} . . . . . 1 each

Finally, the diplomatic facilities of Mexico and West Germany were each seized three times, and terrorists or militants struck Yugoslavia, Sweden, Spain, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Panama twice each (see Table 3).

### **The Hostage-Takers' Demands**

In most embassy seizures where demands were made (20 out of 36), the demands were directed at the host country. In 10 other cases, the attackers made their principal demands on the government whose embassy they had seized. For example, Japanese terrorists who took over the French embassy at The Hague in 1974 demanded the release of a Japanese terrorist imprisoned in France.

In two cases, the attackers made demands on both the government of the host country and the government of the country whose embassy they had occupied. In four cases, the terrorists made their principal demands on neither the host nor the embassy country. For example, Palestinian terrorists who had seized control of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum in 1973 addressed their demands to Jordan, Israel, and the United States. When these demands were not met, they murdered the one Belgian and two Americans they held but released the Jordanian and Saudi Arabian diplomats.

**Table 3**  
**THE DIPLOMATIC POSTS SEIZED**

Nationality of Diplomatic Post	No. of Incidents
Egypt . . . . .	5
United States . . . . .	5
France . . . . .	4
Federal Republic of Germany . . . . .	3
Mexico . . . . .	3
Panama . . . . .	2
Saudi Arabia . . . . .	2
Spain . . . . .	2
Syria . . . . .	2
Venezuela . . . . .	2
Yugoslavia . . . . .	2
International Organizations . . . . .	2
Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom	} . . 1 each

The most common demand—for the release of prisoners—figured in 26 cases. In a few cases, a demand for cash ransom accompanied the demand for the release of prisoners, but generally money was not the primary objective. Terrorist groups who seek cash kidnap businessmen, more lucrative targets. In five cases, demands were made for exit visas, safe passage, or political asylum. In 1974, for example, Palestinian terrorists seized the Japanese embassy in Kuwait to demand safe passage for a team of Japanese and Palestinian terrorists who had hijacked a ferry in Singapore after failing to blow up an oil refinery.

The rest of the demands were mixed, including the broadcasting of manifestos and the renunciation of treaties. Palestinian gunmen holding the Egyptian embassy in Madrid demanded that Egypt renounce the Sinai agreement with Israel. When Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, Palestinians stormed the Egyptian embassies in Kuwait, Teheran, and Bangladesh. Guerrillas in the Dominican embassy in Bogotá held the greatest number of ambassadors and made the most extravagant demands: They called for the release of 311 prisoners and \$50 million in cash. They reportedly received a ransom of \$2 million from what were described as private sources, and safe passage to Cuba on April 27, 1980, when they released the last of their hostages. The hostage-takers' demands are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**THE NATURE OF THE DEMANDS**

Demand	No. of Incidents
Release of prisoners . . . . .	26
Safe passage, <sup>a</sup> political asylum, exit visa . . . . .	5
Money . . . . .	4
Breaking of diplomatic relations . . . . .	2
Other (e.g., renunciation of treaties, broadcasting of manifestos, granting of independence to South Molucca, recognition of the PLO, return of the Shah of Iran) . . . . .	5

<sup>a</sup>Safe passage, of course, was included in the demands in almost all cases; the cases indicated in this table are those in which safe passage or political asylum was the only demand. (The numbers add up to more than 36 because of multiple demands, i.e., release of prisoners plus money.)

### **Increasing Resistance to Demands**

Whether seizing embassies is an effective means of pressing demands depends on one's outlook and evaluation of terrorists' goals. Some kind of demands were made in 36 incidents; the demands were fully met in six cases and partially met in five others. In one case, the outcome is unclear, and in another—the American embassy takeover in Teheran—the incident continues. Full or partial success in 11 cases out of 34 (i.e., not counting the incident in which the outcome is unclear and the incident that continues) may be an uninspiring record to most people, but it may be satisfactory to desperate persons who are willing to let themselves be captured or killed to achieve their ends.

Hostage-takers have found it especially hard to force governments to free prisoners. Demands for freedom for prisoners were fully met in only two cases out of 26 and were partially met in three more. In all, fewer than 40 prisoners were freed as a result of embassy seizures.

Of the 11 cases in which demands for the release of prisoners were fully or partially met (excluding those cases in which the terrorists dropped all of their demands for safe passage), seven occurred between 1971 and 1975, only four between 1976 and 1980. Clearly, the rate of success has declined, an indication that governments generally have become more resistant to yielding to terrorists holding hostages.



(This is a trend that has also been noted in other types of hostage situations involving demands on governments.) Hostage-takers in the first half of the decade achieved their aims, at least partially, more than 40 percent of the time; the success rate dropped to 25 percent in the second half of the decade. The period of greatest success for the hostage-takers was in 1974 and 1975, when they achieved at least partial success in six out of 10 incidents.

Of course, in terms of gaining national and international publicity, virtually all of the embassy seizures have been successful for the terrorists. There is no apparent correlation between the number of hostages held and the achievement of "success."

Overall then, with the exception of the publicity aspect, taking over embassies appears to be a losing proposition for terrorists. They come away with little but their skins and not always that. Their demands were fully met in less than 17 percent of the cases. Terrorists were arrested, captured, or killed in 48 percent of the cases where they made demands.

We should not, however, underestimate the perceived value of publicity to terrorists. From what little information we have about the mental set of terrorists when they plan their operations, the achievement of publicity appears to be a principal, if not the paramount, objective. In 11 of the hostage-taking incidents, getting attention appeared to be the principal goal (incidents 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 41, and 47 in the chronology given in the Appendix.)

Although shootings occurred during the initial moments of the takeover in several of these incidents, all ended peacefully, with the hostage-takers being flown to another country in three cases, surrendering to authorities in two cases, and leaving of their own accord (with local authorities making no move to arrest them) in six cases.

In seven cases, the hostage-takers were persuaded to accept the "Bangkok solution"—safe passage out of the country in lieu of other demands. The term derives from the seizure of the Israeli embassy in Bangkok in 1972 by four Black September terrorists who demanded that the Israeli government release 36 Arab guerrillas. Thai officials, with the help of the Egyptian ambassador, persuaded the terrorists to drop their original demands and settle for safe passage out of the country. This compromise saved the hostages, freed the government from yielding to terrorist blackmail, and allowed the hostage-takers to get away satisfied with the publicity the incident gained them.

In 19 of the 36 cases involving demands, the hostage-takers were permitted to fly to another country or simply walk away. In 10 incidents where embassies were assaulted or occupied but no demands were made, the perpetrators apparently also escaped death or capture. In all, then, hostage-takers escaped in 29 of the 48 episodes.

Most of the incidents are measured in hours, not days. The average incident lasted about two days, but there have been some marathon sieges. Leftist gunmen held Barbara Hutchison, director of the U.S. Information Service, and six other hostages at the Venezuelan consulate in Santo Domingo for 13 days before agreeing to drop their original demands and accept safe passage out of the country. South Moluccans held hostages at the Indonesian consulate for 16 days in 1975 before surrendering. Leftist militants remained barricaded with their hostages for 28 days in the French embassy in San Salvador. Diplomats at the Dominican Republic embassy in Bogotá were held for two months. American diplomats in Iran have been held hostage for over a year. If we do not include the brief takeovers by large groups making no demands, there seems to be a rough correlation between the number of hostage-takers and the duration of the episode. Not surprisingly, larger groups hold out longer.

An examination of the duration of sieges over the years (see Fig. 6) shows an increase in the number of episodes lasting one day or less—in most cases, they have lasted only several hours. The increase is even greater if the nonviolent embassy occupations that were excluded from the present analysis are included. Most of those involved large groups of militants who made no specific demands and for whom storming embassies was a form of political protest. Putting aside these large-group protest actions, the barricade-and-hostage incidents have tended to become longer.

### **The Fate of the Hostages and Their Captors**

Most of the hostages in the embassy seizures were released unharmed. We know the number of hostages and their fates in 36 cases, including the continuing siege in Iran. Of 809 hostages seized in the remaining 35 cases, 790 (98 percent) were released or rescued, six were subsequently killed by their captors, and two died of injuries sustained while attempting to escape. The others were killed during the first moments of the takeover or during assaults by security forces. Twenty-two of the surviving hostages were rescued, 16 escaped, and the remaining 752 were released.

This does not mean that seizing embassies is a nonviolent business. The hostage-takers were armed in almost all cases, and gunfights occurred in 18 of the 48 incidents. A total of 64 persons, including police, embassy guards, hostages, and hostage-takers, have been killed during initial assaults, during sieges, while attempting to escape, or during a rescue operation by security forces. (Of these, 39 died in a fire at the Spanish embassy in Guatemala.)

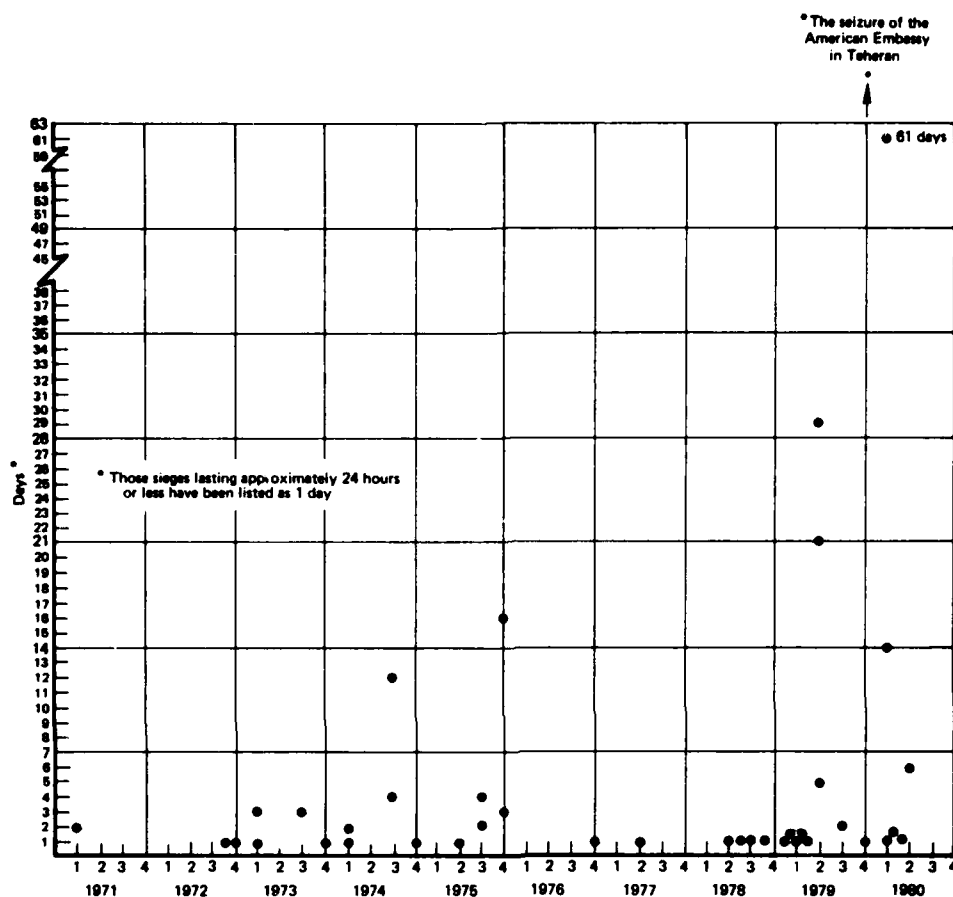


Fig. 6—Duration of embassy takeovers

"Executions" are rare; they are known to have occurred in only three incidents—in Stockholm, Khartoum, and London. When their demands were rejected, Black September terrorists holding the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum murdered two Americans and a Belgian diplomat. Iranian terrorists holding the Iranian embassy in London murdered two of their hostages when their demands were not met. And German terrorists storming the German embassy in Stockholm fatally wounded the military attaché when police did not move back quickly enough.

How did the hostage-takers fare? We do not have complete information on the exact number of hostage-takers in some of the incidents, particularly those in which large groups were involved. In those incidents for which we do have complete information, it appears that two-thirds of the hostage-takers (216 out of 326) either evaded capture,

simply walked away, or were given safe passage to another country. Seventy surrendered or were captured by police, and 40 were killed (32 of them in a single incident in Guatemala).

Although governments have in recent years demonstrated a greater willingness to use force to end hostage situations, they have been reluctant to order assaults when the lives of foreign diplomats are at stake. In one case, police were able to sneak in and kill a lone gunman, but that can hardly be called an assault.

In only two cases did police assault embassies. Guatemalan police stormed the Spanish embassy in Guatemala City, which had been occupied by gunmen and militants. It was a Pyrrhic victory. During the assault, a fire started and 39 people died, including all but one of the 33 hostage-takers and all but one of the eight hostages. The government was strongly criticized for its precipitate action, and Spain broke diplomatic relations with Guatemala.

British commandos had better luck. When Iranian terrorists holding the Iranian embassy in London murdered two of their hostages and threatened to kill another one every half hour if their demands were not met, British commandos were ordered to assault the embassy and rescue the remaining hostages. The commandos killed two of the terrorists and captured three others (one of whom subsequently died of wounds). All of the remaining hostages were freed.

### **Does Security Work?**

Security appears to work in one sense, but in another sense, it does not. The countries that are the most frequent targets of terrorist attacks are underrepresented in the embassy takeovers. According to our chronology of 1,166 incidents of international terrorism from 1968 to 1978, five countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, West Germany, and France) were the targets of 53 percent of the terrorist attacks. Yet seizures of their embassies or consulates account for only one-fourth of the 48 incidents—and three of these were takeovers by militant mobs in Iran. In two of these cases, hostages were seized outside the building and then taken in. Gunmen kidnapped the American ambassador to Haiti in 1973, then brought him to his own residence, where he was held hostage along with the American consul general. Later that year, a lone gunman in Cuba kidnapped the Belgian ambassador and brought him into the French embassy in Havana at gunpoint.

Putting aside these two special cases and the episodes in Teheran where embassies faced large-scale assaults and received no protection from the local government, the embassies of the nations most fre-

quently targeted by terrorists have been taken on only seven occasions. Heavy security measures adopted by these countries—particularly Israel, the United States, and Germany—in response to the threat of terrorism have made these embassies virtual fortresses and apparently have deterred takeover attempts. In that sense, security has worked. (In the wake of a wave of embassy takeovers in El Salvador in 1979 and 1980, both West Germany and the United Kingdom closed their embassies and withdrew their personnel.)

However, security does not work in the sense that, for terrorists, the targets are virtually limitless. If embassies are well-guarded, the terrorists may seize less-protected consular offices in cities where such attacks are not usually anticipated. In 1975, Japanese terrorists seized 53 hostages at the U.S. and Swedish consular offices in Kuala Lumpur. In 1978, Croatian gunmen seized the consular offices of Germany in Chicago. They have also attacked smaller embassies, including that of Saudi Arabia in Khartoum and that of the Dominican Republic in Bogotá, timing their attacks to coincide with diplomatic receptions, thus capturing the diplomats of several nations.

### **Terrorist Innovations**

While the temporal distribution of embassy seizures suggests that terrorists are imitative, the use of the tactic itself shows that terrorists are in fact innovative to a limited degree, or at least adaptive. The tactic of embassy takeovers was an innovation, if not an original invention, that grew out of the airliner hijackings and political kidnappings of the late 1960s and very early 1970s. As hijackings declined from 1972 through 1975, the number of barricade-and-hostage incidents increased. The objectives remained the same, and the demands remained the same. The only thing different was the "vessel" in which the hostages were held.

A second possible innovation is reflected in the target of the demands. If Israel could be tough when Israeli hostages were involved, as they were in the Munich and Bangkok incidents, terrorists may have questioned whether Israel or Jordan would take an equally hard line if the hostages were the diplomats of other nations. Thus, in 1973, terrorists held the diplomats of one nation hostage in order to make demands on another. In fact, in the Khartoum incident, Israel and Jordan did take an equally hard line, and the overall historical record shows no significant difference between the success rate of terrorists making demands on the hostages' own government and the success rate of those holding hostages of one nation to make demands on another.

With the hardening of government policies toward hostage-takers in the mid-1970s came an increased willingness to resolve a situation by force whenever feasible. The Israelis had almost always rejected the demands of terrorists holding hostages in Israel, repeatedly ending such incidents by military assault. At Entebbe, Israel successfully extended its policy beyond its own borders. Dutch troops attacked South Moluccans holding a train in the Netherlands in 1977, and German commandos rescued the passengers of a hijacked Lufthansa airliner at Mogadishu later that same year. Barricading oneself with one's hostages became a more dangerous business, and terrorist use of that tactic began to decline in 1976. (It would be incautious, however, to infer a causal relationship; other factors may also explain the decline.) As already noted, governments, although perhaps more inclined to use force in the latter half of the decade, were generally reluctant to assault embassies and assume responsibility for dead diplomats. The sharp increase in embassy seizures in 1978 as other barricade-and-hostage situations declined suggests a third innovation: In response to the increased likelihood of assault by government forces, terrorists chose the targets least likely to be assaulted. (Again, however, the inference must be qualified. The sharp increase in embassy takeovers since 1978 can be attributed almost entirely to the political strife in Iran and El Salvador.)

A fourth possible example of terrorist adaptation may be noted in the increased number of takeovers of less-protected embassies of smaller countries, such as the Spanish embassy in San Salvador and the Dominican Republic embassy in Bogotá. This could represent a terrorist response to the heavy security that usually surrounds the American, British, German, and Israeli embassies.

A fifth innovation is the coordinated seizure of hostages at several locations. In 1975, South Moluccan extremists simultaneously hijacked a train in the Netherlands and seized the Indonesian consulate in Amsterdam. Palestinians attempted unsuccessfully to take control of the Syrian embassies in both Rome and Islamabad in October 1976. They succeeded in Rome, but the Islamabad attempt failed. In another apparently coordinated operation, guerrillas in El Salvador seized the French and Costa Rican embassies on May 5, 1979, and took over the Venezuelan embassy six days later, while the other two embassies were still being held.

### III. IMPLICATIONS OF TIGHTER SECURITY FOR FUTURE EMBASSY ATTACKS

The readiness of terrorists or other militants to seize embassies in the future will depend in part on how they perceive the outcome of the recent episodes. Perceived victories by the hostage-takers will inspire imitation; failure, however, will not necessarily deter future seizures. The early failures at Bangkok and Khartoum—failures in that the hostage-takers' principal demands were not met—did not lead to the abandonment of the tactic. Terrorists may measure success differently. Their goals may not all be articulated in formal demands. Gaining international attention, causing crises, and embarrassing governments, which almost all hostage-takers have succeeded in doing, may provide sufficient reward.

The security measures in effect at diplomatic posts will continue to be increased. Governments will demand more protection of their diplomats by local governments, and during periods of political strife they will be more inclined to withdraw their diplomatic personnel. Governments will most likely adhere to current hard-line policies with regard to terrorists' demands. At the same time, it is possible that some governments, in the wake of the Teheran, Bogotá, and London episodes, may more readily yield to anything considered "reasonable," perhaps even the release of some prisoners, simply to avoid protracted diplomatic and political crises. Alternatively, they may be more ready to use force at the outset for the same reason.

If governments adhere to a no-concessions policy, sieges could become longer and longer. Thus, greater attention will undoubtedly be devoted not only to protecting embassies but also to preparing embassies, and diplomats, for long sieges, or, if force becomes the preferable option, for fast shootouts.

## EPILOGUE

The routine delays of review, revision, and editing of this report provided an opportunity to examine several more recent incidents. As mentioned in the Preface, the 48 incidents discussed in the text all occurred before the arbitrarily chosen cutoff date of June 1, 1980. During the following three months, several forcible intrusions took place at embassies. However, none of these incidents appear to fall clearly within the same category as the embassy takeovers.

On June 4, two Iraqi gunmen walked into the Iraqi embassy in Rome. Once inside, they pulled out pistols and ordered an embassy chauffeur to call Iraqi consular officials who were elsewhere in the building. (The newly appointed Iraqi ambassador had not yet arrived in Rome, so the consular officials were the highest-ranking diplomats present.) As the chauffeur began speaking on the telephone, one of the two gunmen bolted through the door and began firing near the embassy's front entrance. At this point, the other gunman seemed to lose control. Visibly shaking, he opened fire on the embassy staff, shouting, "Long live Khomeini!" He then ran out through a side door. One embassy employee, the chauffeur, was killed, and another was wounded. One of the gunmen escaped, and the other was wounded. Police later found and deactivated a powerful bomb in the briefcase that had been carried in by one of the two assailants. Without information from the interrogation of the captured gunman, we cannot say with certainty that the two had planned to take over the embassy. However, the episode looks very much like a takeover aborted by a failure of nerve on the part of the gunmen. Alternatively, the first gunman might have been prompted to begin shooting by some action on the part of embassy security guards.

On June 19, three terrorists shot their way into the British embassy in Baghdad. The gunmen fired several shots and threw two hand grenades, but no one was injured. Iraqi security officials, responding to a British request for assistance, stormed the building after one hour, killing all three gunmen. The three never physically took any hostages or made any demands, so the episode is not clearly an embassy takeover. However, the terrorists might have held the embassy and its occupants had the Iraqi security forces not promptly assaulted the building.

Militant Iranian students occupied the Iranian embassy in Paris on July 4, 1980, to "protest against those who claim to be supporters" of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and "who do nothing for our poor and



our martyrs." It is not clear whether the Iranian ambassador and several members of his staff held inside the embassy were hostages or remained in the building voluntarily. If their action was voluntary, the episode should be counted among the numerous nonviolent sit-ins rather than among the embassy seizures. French police moved in and arrested the students after eight hours.

The Costa Rican embassy in San Salvador was taken over on July 11, 1980. However, this incident poses a definitional problem for the observer. It also clearly presented a tactical problem for security forces, and it may presage a trend. The episode began when leftist gunmen shot their way past embassy guards, killing one, and led approximately 100 peasants—including women, children, and some elderly people—inside to occupy the building. The gunmen, members of a group known as LP-28, demanded a halt to alleged government repression in the rural areas and political asylum in Costa Rica. The Costa Rican ambassador persuaded Salvadoran security forces to withdraw, and negotiations with the occupiers began. During the course of the negotiations, leaders from LP-28 led 115 more peasants into the embassy on July 17, and ten more on July 21. (The same group had been responsible for a number of previous embassy takeovers in El Salvador.) Exasperated with the lack of progress in the negotiations, Costa Rica accused the leftists of deliberately protracting the event for their own political purposes. On July 22, Costa Rica formally relocated its embassy in El Salvador, leaving the building occupied by the group without diplomatic status. Costa Rica did, however, eventually offer asylum to the more than 200 occupiers, and the incident ended peacefully on July 26.

Although the occupiers were mostly unarmed peasants and no hostages were held, the takeover itself was certainly accomplished by force of arms, and one embassy guard was killed. In that sense, the incident resembles many of the airline hijackings that have been perpetrated by groups seeking political asylum in another country. Such acts are not in the same category as the campaigns of violence waged by groups dedicated to the overthrow of governments, except that the lives of innocent bystanders are often jeopardized to satisfy basically political goals. On the basis of that aspect alone, however, they may be included with other acts of terrorism.

The seizure of the Costa Rican embassy also clearly involved two separate groups with divergent aims: the large body of unarmed peasants and the smaller contingent of armed leftists. The peasants appear to have been genuine refugees fleeing political violence and economic hardship in the countryside, perhaps persuaded by the leftists that they would find a better life in Costa Rica. The leftist group wanted a propaganda event that would focus attention on conditions in El

Salvador and embarrass its government. The leftists no doubt had arranged the takeover and clearly were manipulating the event. According to reports from the scene, many of the peasants did not know why they had been taken to the embassy, and at one point some of them wanted to leave the cramped quarters—the house had been designed for seven occupants. Members of the leftist group persuaded them to remain and subsequently appear to have assumed a more active role in the negotiations.

This tactic has several attractive features from the standpoint of the attackers. Substituting large numbers of peasants for small groups of armed fanatics allows more sympathetic coverage in the news media. Manipulated or not, the occupiers are innocents. Moreover, it dissuades the security forces from taking action; if they should resort to recovering the embassy by force, they would be seen dragging, clubbing, or shooting women, children, and old people—thus providing opponents of the government with a major propaganda victory. This recalls an earlier tactic used by anti-government demonstrators in Central America in the 1960s. University student organizers frequently placed women and secondary-school students at the front and along the sides of columns marching on the national palace and gave them banners and placards to carry. Male university students marched in the center of the column, their numbers augmented by workers from sympathetic labor unions. The women and younger students were thus the first to confront the line of police. If the police were ordered to break up the demonstration, they were seen and photographed tearing banners from the hands of women, swinging their batons down on the heads of children.

The seizure of the Costa Rican embassy provides an interesting example of an innovation in dealing with such takeovers. When the negotiations became deadlocked, Costa Rica announced the formal abandonment of its embassy, removing the property's diplomatic status. This placed the problem of dealing with the incident entirely in the hands of the local authorities. Of course, if hostages were being held in the embassy, such a move would be precluded.

While the occupation of the Costa Rican embassy was still in progress, Salvadoran military authorities announced that they had succeeded in thwarting the seizure of another embassy: The same leftist group that was responsible for the seizure of the Costa Rican embassy, LP-28, had reportedly assembled 131 peasants who were being transported to the capital by six leaders of the group. But government troops intercepted one of the buses outside the capital city. The Italian embassy was reported to have been the target.

## **Appendix**

### **A CHRONOLOGY OF EMBASSY TAKEOVERS: 1971-1980<sup>1</sup>**

1. February 10, 1971                      Sweden

Two Croatian émigrés seized the Yugoslav consulate in Gothenburg and demanded the release of prisoners held in Yugoslavia. Their demands were refused, and they surrendered to Swedish authorities.

2. October 6, 1972                      Algeria

Palestinian students seized the West German consulate in Algiers and demanded the release of three surviving Arab terrorists who participated in the 1972 Munich incident. They held hostages for about an hour before leaving the embassy.

3. December 28, 1972                      Thailand

Black September terrorists seized the Israeli embassy in Bangkok and demanded the release of Arab guerrillas imprisoned in Israel. After 18 hours of negotiations, Thai officials and the Egyptian ambassador persuaded the four terrorists to drop their demands, release their 12 hostages, and accept safe passage out of the country.

4. January 23, 1973                      Haiti

Three gunmen (two men and a woman) kidnapped the American ambassador and held him at his residence along with the American consul general. They demanded the release of 30 prisoners and a cash ransom. After hours of negotiation, they were permitted to fly out of the country with 12 prisoners and part of the ransom.

5. February 20, 1973                      United Kingdom

Three Pakistanis attacked the Indian High Commission (the equivalent of the Indian embassy) in London and seized hostages whom they intended to exchange for the release of Pakistani prisoners held by India. Police shot two of the gunmen and arrested the third.

<sup>1</sup> This chronology includes seizures of embassies, consular offices, official residences, and offices of international organizations that have diplomatic status. It excludes sackings and sit-ins where there were no demands or implied threats to hostages.

**6. March 1, 1973                      Sudan**

Black September terrorists seized the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum during a diplomatic reception. They held five hostages, including the American ambassador and the deputy chief of mission, the Belgian chargé, the Saudi Arabian ambassador, and the Jordanian chargé. Many other diplomats escaped. The terrorists demanded the release of 60 Palestinian guerrillas being held in Jordan, all Arab women detained in Israel, Sirhan Sirhan (the convicted assassin of Senator Robert Kennedy), and members of the Baader-Meinhof gang imprisoned in Germany. (The terrorists had hoped to take the German ambassador hostage.) During the course of the negotiations, they dropped their demands on Germany and Israel. The principal demand seemed to be the release of an Al Fatah leader held in Jordan. When their demands were rejected, the eight terrorists murdered one Belgian and two American diplomats and surrendered to Sudanese authorities.

**7. September 5, 1973                      France**

Five Palestinian commandos seized the Saudi Arabian embassy in Paris. In return for the release of their 13 hostages, they demanded the release of a Palestinian leader held in Jordan. This demand was rejected, but the terrorists were given a plane to fly out of France with four of their hostages. Ultimately, the terrorists landed in Kuwait, where they released the remaining hostages. In October, the Kuwaiti government permitted the five to leave for Syria.

**8. October 15, 1973                      Cuba**

An anti-Castro Cuban kidnapped the Belgian ambassador to Cuba and held him hostage along with the French ambassador (who volunteered to remain with his Belgian colleague) at the French embassy in Havana. The kidnapper demanded that he be permitted to leave Cuba. Rejecting this demand, Cuban security forces secretly entered the embassy to rescue the hostages. They killed the gunman in a brief shootout. The two ambassadors were unharmed.

**9. February 6, 1974                      Kuwait**

Five members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) took over the Japanese embassy in Kuwait, taking about 12 hostages, including the Japanese ambassador. They demanded that the Japanese government supply an airplane to bring their four com-

rades from Singapore to Kuwait. (The four, two members of the Japanese Red Army and two members of the PFLP, had seized hostages aboard a ferryboat in Singapore after trying to blow up a Shell Oil Company refinery in that city. The government of Singapore had refused their demands for safe passage to an Arab country, and the situation remained at an impasse until the February 6 incident.) The Japanese government agreed. The plane carrying the four terrorists from Singapore landed in Kuwait and, after picking up the other five, who had released their hostages, went on to South Yemen, where it arrived on February 8.

10. September 7, 1974      Dominican Republic

Gunmen kidnapped Barbara Hutchison, director of the U.S. Information Service in the Dominican Republic. They took her to the Venezuelan consulate, where they had seized six other hostages. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of \$1 million and the release of 37 prisoners imprisoned in the Dominican Republic. Both demands were refused. After 13 days of negotiations, the kidnappers released their hostages in return for safe passage out of the country. One of the hostages escaped by jumping from a window during the course of the negotiations.

11. September 13, 1974      The Netherlands

Three Japanese terrorists, members of the United Red Army, entered the French embassy in The Hague and seized five hostages, including Jacques Senard, the French ambassador to the Netherlands. They demanded the release of a Red Army member imprisoned in Paris. The French government agreed to the demand, and the hostages were released. They kidnappers were flown to a Middle Eastern country as part of the bargain.

12. November 18, 1974      United States

A lone gunman entered the Philippine embassy in Washington, D.C., where he wounded one embassy official and seized the Philippine ambassador to the United States. The gunman demanded that his son, whose exit visa from the Philippines had been delayed, be permitted to join the rest of his family in the United States. The Philippine government agreed, and the son was immediately flown to Washington, whereupon the gunman released his hostage and surrendered to authorities.

**13. December 5, 1974                      Mexico**

A lone member of the September 23 guerrilla group took two hostages at the French embassy in Mexico City and demanded political asylum. After four hours of negotiations, the Mexican government acceded to his demands; however, the gunman was later disarmed and arrested at the airport.

**14. April 24, 1975                      Sweden**

Seven West German terrorists took over the German embassy in Stockholm and seized 12 hostages, including the West German ambassador to Sweden. Two of the hostages were killed during the 12-hour episode. Identifying themselves as members of a group called "Kommando Holger Meins," the terrorists demanded that 26 comrades imprisoned in West Germany be freed and flown out of the country with more than \$500,000 ransom. When the West German government refused to release the prisoners, the terrorists set off their explosives and attempted to escape. Several hostages were injured in the explosion. Six of the terrorists were captured; the seventh reportedly committed suicide rather than allow himself to be taken alive.

**15. August 3, 1975                      Malaysia**

Five Japanese terrorists of the Japanese Red Army seized the consular section of the U.S. embassy in Kuala Lumpur. They seized 53 hostages, including U.S. Consul Robert Stebbins and Swedish Chargé d'Affaires Frederick Bergenstrahle. The terrorists demanded the release of seven Japanese extremists held in Japan. The government of Japan agreed to release five of the prisoners; the other two prisoners stated that they did not want to go. On August 7, the prisoners were flown to Kuala Lumpur, where they were joined by the terrorists. Accompanied by two Malaysian and two Japanese government officials who volunteered to replace the hostages held at the embassy, the group flew to Libya where the terrorists surrendered to Libyan government authorities.

**16. September 15, 1975                      Spain**

Four Arab terrorists forced their way into the Egyptian embassy in Madrid and threatened to blow it up and kill the Egyptian ambassador and two aides if Egypt would not renounce its Sinai agreement with Israel. The Egyptian ambassador in Madrid, along with the ambassadors of Iraq, Kuwait, Algeria, and Jordan, who acted as mediators, signed a document denouncing the Sinai agreement. The terrorists

with their three Egyptian hostages, accompanied by the Iraqi and Algerian ambassadors, flew to Algeria on September 16, where they released their prisoners. The Egyptian government called the document that ended the siege "a worthless piece of paper."

17. December 2, 1975                      The Netherlands

Six South Moluccan extremists shot their way into the Indonesian consulate in Amsterdam and seized 47 persons. One hostage was killed in a fall as he attempted to escape. The terrorists demanded independence for the formerly Dutch-ruled islands of South Molucca. This episode occurred two days after a separate group of South Moluccan extremists had hijacked a passenger train. The gunmen holding the train also had demanded the release of five Moluccans imprisoned in the Netherlands, Dutch recognition of their government in exile, and a plane to take them to an undisclosed destination. The Dutch government rejected all demands of both groups. The train hijackers surrendered on December 12, and those holding the Indonesian consulate released their hostages and surrendered after a 16-day siege.

18. December 21, 1975                      Austria

Six German, Arab, and Latin American terrorists calling themselves the "Arm of the Arab Revolution" burst into a meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Vienna, taking 60 people hostage. Among the hostages were 11 delegates to the meeting, including the oil ministers of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela, and Colombia. The terrorists demanded the broadcast of their manifesto and a plane to take them and their hostages out of Austria. The government of Austria complied, and a jetliner with 41 hostages flew to Algeria, where most of the hostages were released, then on to Libya. Taking off again, the plane was refused permission to land in Baghdad and Tunis and returned to Algiers, where the terrorists released their hostages and were in turn granted political asylum by the government of Algeria.

19. October 11, 1976                      Italy

Three Palestinians seized the Syrian embassy in Rome to draw world attention to Syria's "betrayal" of the Palestinians. The three terrorists claimed to be members of Black June, a Palestinian group which takes its name from the date of Syria's military intervention in Lebanon. The terrorists held five hostages, one of whom was seriously wounded, for about two hours. They then surrendered to Italian authorities.

## 20. October 11, 1976                      Pakistan

In an effort apparently coordinated with the seizure of the Syrian embassy in Rome, three Palestinian terrorists attempted to take the Syrian embassy in Islamabad but were intercepted by police. One terrorist was killed and two were wounded in the ensuing gun battle.

## 21. June 14, 1977                      United States

Three Croatian gunmen seized the offices of the Yugoslav mission to the United Nations. They wounded the mission chauffeur in the takeover but failed to take any hostages. No specific demands were made. The attackers apparently wanted to gain publicity for the Croatian Separatist Movement. After two hours of negotiations with New York police, the three were persuaded to surrender.

## 22. February 2, 1978                      El Salvador

Two dozen leftist guerrillas of the Popular Revolutionary Bloc seized the United Nations office in San Salvador. They took seven persons hostage and demanded the release of political prisoners. The government rejected their demands, but a U.N. official promised the guerrillas that a request would be made for a U.N. commission to investigate alleged violations of human rights in El Salvador.

## 23. May 24, 1978                      Brazil

A lone gunman seized the honorary Mexican consul and four other hostages at the consul's office in Recife. The gunman demanded safe passage out of the country to Mexico, Cuba, Sweden, or Eastern Europe. Believing his demands were to be met, he released his hostages and was promptly arrested.

## 24. July 3, 1978                      Puerto Rico

A man and a woman, both armed, took over the offices of the Chilean consulate in San Juan. In return for the release of the four hostages they had taken, the terrorists demanded the release of four Puerto Ricans in the United States who had been imprisoned for carrying out an armed attack on the U.S. House of Representatives and the attempted assassination of President Harry Truman. After 17 hours of negotiations, the two were persuaded to release their hostages and surrender.



25. July 31, 1978

France

Two Arab gunmen attacked the Iraqi embassy in Paris, but one of them fled during the assault. In return for the release of his eight (or, according to some reports, nine) hostages, the remaining gunman demanded freedom for an Arab woman in the United Kingdom who had been arrested for participation in the attempted assassination of the Iraqi ambassador in London. The demands were rejected, and the lone terrorist was persuaded to release his hostages and surrender after eight hours. As he was being led away, Iraqi guards at the embassy opened fire, wounding the gunman and killing one policeman. Returning the fire, police killed one of the Iraqis and wounded three others.

26. August 17, 1978

United States

Two Croatian gunmen seized control of the West German consulate in Chicago, taking eight hostages. They demanded that the German government release a Croatian held in Cologne and provide assurances that it would not permit his extradition to Yugoslavia. After 10 hours of negotiations, the two men released their hostages and surrendered to police.

27. January 16, 1979

El Salvador

About 30 to 40 young leftist gunmen of the United Popular Action Front seized the Mexican embassy, the Organization of American States building, and the offices of the Red Cross, taking, according to various reports, from 120 to 156 persons hostage. The terrorists demanded the release of 72 prisoners, government pardons for others, an accounting of all missing prisoners and freedom for those still alive, and a general amnesty for political prisoners held but not yet tried. After two days of negotiations, they freed their hostages and were granted safe passage to Mexico.

28. February 14, 1979

Iran

A large group of armed militants took over the American embassy in Teheran and held the American ambassador and approximately 100 of his staff members hostage for about two hours. One Iranian employee of the embassy was killed and two American Marine guards were wounded in the attack. The militants left the embassy led by Iranian revolutionary guards headed by the deputy prime minister of the provisional government of Iran.

## 29. March 27, 1979 Bangladesh

Protesting the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, armed Arab militants stormed the Egyptian embassy in Dacca and held the ambassador hostage for several hours. They made no demands.

## 30. March 27, 1979 Iran

Armed Arab students seized the Egyptian embassy in Teheran to protest the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. They hoisted the Palestinian flag over the embassy and addressed hundreds of cheering Iranians.

## 31. March 27, 1979 Kuwait

In a similar incident, Palestinians living in Kuwait stormed the Egyptian embassy in that country to protest the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

## 32. May 4, 1979 El Salvador

Sixteen armed members of the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR) seized the French embassy in San Salvador, taking six persons hostage, including the French ambassador. A guard at the French embassy was wounded in the assault. The terrorists demanded the release of five persons imprisoned in El Salvador plus inquiries into alleged government violations of human rights. Also on May 4, another group from the BPR occupied the Metropolitan Cathedral in San Salvador. They made the same demands as the group holding the French and Costa Rican (see incident 33) embassies. The negotiations for the two embassies continued against a backdrop of mounting violence. National police stormed the cathedral on May 9, killing 17 persons and wounding 35. On May 15, another leftist group attempted unsuccessfully to seize the South African embassy, and on May 30, unidentified gunmen assassinated the Swiss chargé d'affaires. Granted political asylum in Mexico, the militants released their hostages on June 1.

## 33. May 4, 1979 El Salvador

Four armed members of the BPR seized the Costa Rican embassy, taking five persons hostage, including the Costa Rican ambassador. Their demands were the same as those made by the group who had seized the French embassy the same day (incident 32). The Costa Rican hostages escaped on May 9 while their captors were eating

dinner, but the group continued to hold the embassy until they were granted safe passage to Costa Rica.

34. May 11, 1979                      El Salvador

Following the escape of the hostages held at the Costa Rican embassy, nine members of the BPR seized the Venezuelan embassy in San Salvador, taking the ambassador and seven others hostage. They made the same demands as had those who held the French and Costa Rican embassies. On May 20, the ambassador and four staff members escaped. However, the militants continued to hold the embassy until June 1, when they were granted safe passage out of the country and political asylum in Mexico.

35. May 15, 1979                      El Salvador

Eight members of the Farabundo Marti Popular Liberation Forces attempted to seize the South African embassy in San Salvador. The attackers were repulsed after a gun battle with police which left two policemen dead. All of the attackers escaped.

36. June 26, 1979                      Guatemala

Guatemalan workers seized the Mexican embassy, taking the ambassador and approximately 15 to 20 others hostage. They demanded that the Guatemalan government produce a missing labor leader. (The outcome of the episode is not clear.)

37. July 13, 1979                      Turkey

Four Palestinian terrorists armed with machine guns and grenades shot their way into the Egyptian embassy in Ankara, killing two Turkish guards and wounding one policeman. Inside the embassy, the terrorists took about 20 hostages, including the Egyptian ambassador. The terrorists identified themselves as the "Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution." They threatened to blow up the embassy and kill their hostages unless Turkey broke diplomatic relations with Egypt, recognized the Palestinian state, and gave them safe conduct out of the country. They also demanded that Egypt release two Palestinians imprisoned in Egypt. During the course of the negotiations, the terrorists freed one hostage. Four others escaped, one of whom later died of injuries sustained in a leap from the third floor. After 45 hours, the terrorists released their remaining hostages and surrendered to Turkish authorities.

## 38. October 30, 1979 El Salvador

Approximately 300 armed leftists attempted to storm the American embassy in San Salvador. U.S. Marine guards and local police drove back the attackers. Two Marines were wounded.

## 39. October 31, 1979 El Salvador

A group of unknown attackers attempted to seize the Guatemalan embassy in San Salvador but were driven back by security forces at the embassy after a ten-minute battle. Some of the attackers were believed to have been wounded.

## 40. November 4, 1979 Iran

A large group of Iranian militants seized the American embassy in Teheran, taking 63 persons hostage. In return for the release of their captives, they demanded the return of the Shah, who had been admitted to the United States for medical treatment. On November 20, 13 American hostages (blacks and women) were released. After an abortive rescue attempt on April 25, 1980, the remaining hostages were reportedly dispersed to different cities in Iran. The hostages are still being held.

## 41. November 5, 1979 Iran

A group of militants joined by local security guards took over the British embassy in Teheran and briefly held 27 hostages without making any demands. The militants were later persuaded to leave the embassy.

## 42. January 11, 1980 El Salvador

Approximately 50 leftist militants of the 28 February Popular League seized the Panamanian embassy in San Salvador, taking seven persons hostage, including the Panamanian and Costa Rican ambassadors. The militants demanded the release of three (or seven, according to some reports) members of their group who had been arrested the previous month. The government of El Salvador acceded to their demands, and the group released their hostages on January 14.

## 43. January 31, 1980 Guatemala

A group of 33 armed protestors, apparently led by members of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, a leftist guerrilla group, took over the Spanish embassy in Guatemala City. The Spanish ambassador, five

members of his staff, and two Guatemalan politicians were inside the embassy when Guatemalan police assaulted the building despite the Spanish ambassador's pleas that force not be used to resolve the incident. During the fighting, one of the protestors threw a Molotov cocktail, and within minutes the entire building was in flames. Only the Spanish ambassador and one of the protestors escaped; 39 persons died in the fire. Outraged at the assault, Spain broke diplomatic relations with Guatemala.

44. February 4, 1980                      El Salvador

About 30 members of the Popular League of February 28, a leftist group, seized the Spanish embassy in San Salvador, taking 11 persons hostage, including the Spanish ambassador. They demanded that Spain break diplomatic relations with El Salvador and that the government of El Salvador release five prisoners (the number varies according to reports). The militants released four persons but continued to hold seven hostages, including the ambassador. During the course of negotiations, they released the ambassador and several other hostages on February 13 but held the embassy and two Spanish diplomats until February 18. Those remaining were released after the government of El Salvador freed the last of the prisoners whose release had been demanded.

45. February 13, 1980                      El Salvador

A group of leftist militants seized the Panamanian embassy in San Salvador for the second time in a month, taking three hostages, including the Panamanian ambassador. The militants demanded the release of prisoners. They left the embassy after the ambassador promised that he would present their demands to the government of El Salvador.

46. February 27, 1980                      Colombia

A group of 16 armed members of M-19, a guerrilla group in Colombia, shot their way into the Dominican Republic embassy in Bogotá. Timing their attack to coincide with a diplomatic reception, the guerrillas took 57 persons hostage, including the ambassadors of 11 countries. They demanded the release of 311 prisoners, \$50 million ransom, and safe passage out of the country. During the course of negotiations, the guerrillas freed a number of hostages and scaled down their demands. One diplomat, the Uruguayan ambassador, escaped. The terrorists finally accepted safe passage to Cuba and \$2 million in ransom, after a 61-day siege.

## 47. February 28, 1980                      Panama

A group of 17 Panamanian student militants briefly took over the Salvadoran embassy in Panama City to demand the release of imprisoned comrades. The students ended their occupation after three and a half hours.

## 48. April 30, 1980                      United Kingdom

Five Iranian Arabs seized 26 hostages at the Iranian embassy in London to demand freedom for 31 prisoners jailed in Iran. The terrorists and the prisoners whose release they demanded were members of Iran's Arabic minority in Khuzistan province. During the course of negotiations with British officials, the terrorists released five hostages; then, on the sixth day of the episode, they executed two hostages. To prevent further executions, British commandos assaulted the building on May 5, killing two of the terrorists and capturing three others (one of whom subsequently died of his wounds). All of the remaining hostages were rescued.